

Not Equal Yet:

THE CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS
FACING WOMEN AND GIRLS IN
CONNECTICUT

February 2004



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**THE CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS
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Executive Summary

I n Connecticut, we need the talents and contributions of everyone, including all our women and girls. But women and girls face barriers and challenges to full and equal opportunity and participation in our society.

We asked organizations that attend the Connecticut Women's Agenda meetings to submit information about the most significant barriers and challenges currently facing women and girls in our state, and to identify some of the public policy solutions they propose.

Health Care

Health care is not available, not affordable or insecure, especially for low-income mothers and single adults, small business owners, part-time workers and workers in retail and service jobs.

Equal Pay and Equal Opportunity

Women workers do not earn equal pay and do not have equal opportunity for jobs, entrepreneurship and advancement.

Balancing Work and Family

Workplace policies and work supports including paid family and medical leave and affordable childcare are not sufficiently available and without them it is harder for working parents to make ends meet.

Violence Against Women

Women are victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, and need adequate legal protections and fully funded services.

Affordable Housing

Housing is not sufficiently affordable, making it harder to escape violence, keep a steady job and raise a family in a safe environment.

Reproductive Health Care

Full reproductive healthcare and choice is threatened and not always available to women and girls, and is not fully available to women with disabilities.

Gender-Specific Behavioral Health Care

Women with behavioral health needs do not have access to effective, gender-specific treatment, and face discrimination or lack of appropriate services if they have children.

Family Law

Family laws are not fully inclusive of the rights of all couples, including same sex couples, do not fully protect the needs of custodial parents following divorce in securing such basic needs as health coverage and child support, and may be used unfairly against parents with disabilities.

Equal Education and Job Training

Education and job training programs do not provide equal opportunities and programs to prepare women and girls to enter high-skill, high-wage occupations.

Gender-Appropriate Criminal Justice System

The criminal justice system is not sufficiently prepared to respond to the growing number of incarcerated or system-involved women and girls and cannot provide enough effective gender-appropriate, community-based services and facilities.

Political Participation and Equal Representation

Women are not yet equally represented on state and local boards and commissions nor as elected officials in state or local government.

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women Legislative Priorities 2004

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women provides information, research and analysis to elected officials and the public regarding issues affecting the status of women. The following are our priority issues for the 2004 legislative session.

Restore Funding for Essential Programs

Medicaid and State Assisted General Assistance (SAGA) – Seek restoration of funding for budget cuts that were implemented in the 2003 legislative sessions.

Care 4 Kids – Seek restoration of funding for childcare subsidies for new non-TANF working families.

Nontraditional Occupations Program and Displaced Homemakers Program – Seek restoration of funding for programs that offer job training for women.

Economic Security and Pay Equity

Career Ladders – Support proposals to implement a Career Ladder model for childcare, health care, and information technology workers.

Affordable Housing – Support proposals to increase the number of affordable housing units and provide programs and services to prevent homelessness.

Women and Business Development

Redefining “Small Business” – Support proposals to enhance opportunities for “micro business” by defining the unique needs of these businesses and finding solutions that take into consideration their size and revenue.

Women and Health Care

Medical Malpractice Insurance – Support proposals that protect all physicians, especially obstetricians and gynecologists, from unreasonable insurance premiums and also protect patients who are injured by malpractice.

Connecticut Women's Health Act: A Blueprint for the Future – enact proposals for women and girls' health and wellness including:

- Restoration of Medicaid and SAGA cuts;
- Require insurance coverage of wigs for patients in chemotherapy;
- Implementation of recommendations of the Advisory Committee for Access to Gynecological Services for Women With Disabilities;
- Support proposals that address the need for education and services regarding nutrition and eating disorders;
- Address racial disparities in access to healthcare and quality of healthcare particularly for women of color with or at risk of HIV infection; and
- Ensure access to affordable prescription drugs.

Reproductive Health Care – Oppose any restrictions of access to comprehensive reproductive health care.

Civil Rights

Education Equity – Support proposals to establish a Gender Equity Specialist/Title IX coordinator in every school; strengthen the state law prohibiting sex discrimination in education; and identify and provide staff to the appropriate state agency to investigate claims of discrimination.

Legal Protections for Same Gender Couples – Support measures to extend equal protections, benefits and responsibilities to same gender couples.

Hate Crimes – Strengthen the hate crimes statute by adding “gender identity and expression” and “disability” as categories covered by the law.

Political Participation

Election Day Registration – Enact Election Day registration to increase voter participation.

Violence Against Women

Trafficking of Women and Children – Support proposals to define trafficking in state criminal code and to increase interagency cooperation, data collection, and training.

Criminal Justice and Corrections

Reforms in Juvenile Justice Programs for Girls - Support fully funded, gender appropriate services for female juvenile offenders, including community-based services for non-violent offenders, and a clearer definition of such services.

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We asked organizations that attend the Connecticut Women's Agenda meetings to submit information about the most significant barriers and challenges currently facing women and girls in our state, and to identify some of the public policy solutions they propose. The following organizations submitted responses:

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW)
African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC)
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
CT Association of Nonprofits (CAN)
CT Charts-A-Course
CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV)
CT Legal Rights Project, Inc.
CT National Organization of Women (CT NOW)
CT Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS)
CT Women and Disabilities Network, Inc. (CWDN)
CT Women's Consortium
CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. -- CT Chapters
DemocracyWorks
Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative (HACCC)
Hartford College for Women Career Counseling Center
Latino & Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC)
League of Women Voters of Connecticut, Inc. (LWVCT)
Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut, Inc. (LARCC)
Love Makes A Family (LMF)
MATCH Coalition
Mental Health Association of Connecticut, Inc.

National Association of Women Business Owners – CT Chapter (NAWBO-CT)

National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC)

National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)

Planned Parenthood of Connecticut (PPCT)

Susan B. Anthony Project

Trinity College Women's Center

University of Connecticut Women's Center

YWCA of the Hartford Region, Inc.

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Health Care

Public Policy Solutions

- Repeal laws to institute co-pay and premiums for Medicaid and SAGA. Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), CT Women's Health Campaign (CWHC), CT Association of Nonprofits (CAN), CT National Organization of Women (CT NOW), Legal Assistance Resource Center (LARCC), Mental Health Association of CT, Inc.
- Increase access to quality and affordable health care services for all, including lower cost drugs and direct access for routine and emergency health check-ups and follow-up care. Submitted by: American Association of University Women (AAUW), CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV), National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), YWCA of the Hartford Region, Inc.
- Provide adequate services for DMHAS clients who are also trauma survivors. Submitted by: CT Legal Rights Project, CT Women's Consortium
- Reinstate benefits for legal immigrants. Submitted by: Legal Assistance Resource Center (LARCC)
- Ensure Medicaid coverage of smoking cessation. Submitted by: CT Women's Health Campaign (CWHC), MATCH Coalition

- Maintain and/or implement programs that address the unique health concerns of women and girls, such as teen pregnancy, menopause, breast cancer, and obesity. Submitted by: YWCA of the Hartford Region, Inc.
- Protect statewide smoking ban legislation. Submitted by: MATCH Coalition
- Oppose securitization of tobacco settlement and preserve funds for smoking prevention and cessation for improving public health. Submitted by: MATCH Coalition
- Preserve and enhance investments in health care to address multi-cultural health disparities in the areas of HIV/AIDS, asthma, lead poisoning, tobacco cessation, diabetes and mental health. Submitted by: CT Women's Health Campaign (CWHC), Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC)

Equal Pay And Equal Opportunity

Public Policy Solutions

- Address low wages in the childcare field, which hinder workers from becoming self-sufficient. Submitted by: The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), CT Charts-A-Course
- Provide equal pay to all women. Submitted by: National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC)
- Promote economic justice, including pay equity, livable wages, access to affordable housing and childcare for women. Submitted by: African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC), YWCA of the Hartford Region, Inc.
- Create a state definition of "micro-enterprise" and state policies that recognize the special needs of very small businesses. Submitted by the National Association of Women Business Owners-CT Chapter (NAWBO-CT)

Balancing Work and Family

Public Policy Solutions

- Expand access to affordable childcare to provide quality programs and safe environments for children while their parents work, especially the Care 4 Kids Child Care Subsidy Program. Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative (HACCC)

- **Provide paid family and medical leave to care for children, and family members.**
Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

Violence Against Women

Public Policy Solutions

- **Increase state support for organizations that assist individuals who have been sexually harassed or assaulted.** Submitted by: Trinity College Women's Center
- **Create a restraining order for sexual assault victims to provide a civil remedy to allow victims to obtain a court order to keep the perpetrator away from the victim.** Submitted by: CT Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS), Susan B. Anthony Project
- **Provide access to restraining orders when court is not in session.** Submitted by: Susan B. Anthony Project
- **Provide funding to provide 24/7 staffing of domestic violence shelters.** Submitted by: Susan B. Anthony Project
- **Build the organizational capacity of community-based rape crisis centers, which is essential to ensure a coordinated community response to sexual assault by increasing funding.** Submitted by: CT Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS)
- **Provide HIV counseling, referrals, or other supports to victims of sexual assault when the results of a court ordered HIV test of the offender are disclosed.**
Submitted by: CT Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS)
- **Provide women and girls greater protection and freedom from bias, harassment and violence in educational institutions, workplaces, homes and communities.**
Submitted by: CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF), National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)
- **Identify and prosecute the trafficking of women and children in Connecticut, and create a permanent task force to monitor trafficking of women and children.**
Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), DemocracyWorks, CT NOW, CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

Affordable Housing

Public Policy Solutions

- Provide funding for affordable housing and shelter for women in domestic violence situations. Submitted by: CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV)
- Provide safe and secure environments that allow access to opportunities for employment, leadership, and education for all women and girls. Submitted by: YWCA of the Hartford Region, Inc.
- Expand affordable housing and rental assistance programs to low-income families. Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC), Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC)

Reproductive Health Care

Public Policy Solutions

- Advocate the right of choice in all aspects of the lives of women and girls, including reproductive choice. Submitted by: American Association of University Women (AAUW)
- Conduct research, planning and strategic development to strengthen the field of midwifery. Submitted by: CT National Organization for Women (CT NOW)
- Establish a medical advisory group to reinforce and disseminate current best practices and to develop standards for the provision of care specific to the needs of women with cognitive, psychiatric and/or physical disabilities. Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), CT Women's Health Campaign (CWHC), CT Women and Disability Network (CWDN)
- Charge a regulatory body to monitor standards in all settings for the provision of care developed by the medical advisory group that are specific to women with cognitive, psychiatric and/or physical disabilities. Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), CT Women's Health Campaign (CWHC), CT Women and Disability Network (CWDN)
- Increase the Medicare and/or Medicaid reimbursement rates for extended visits for clients with disabilities. Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), CT Women's Health Campaign (CWHC), CT Women and Disability Network (CWDN)

- Increase access to abortion services and protect reproductive rights as established by the Roe v. Wade decision. Submitted by: National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)
- Ensure access to reproductive health care services in the fullest sense including government funding for low-income women and insurance coverage. Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), Planned Parenthood of CT (PPC)
- Protect access of minors to confidential services without parental consent requirements that impede provision of family planning or abortion services to young women. Submitted by: Planned Parenthood of CT (PPC)

Gender-Specific Behavioral Health Care

- Require state agencies to provide gender-specific behavioral health services to women and girls. Submitted by: CT Women's Health Campaign (CWHC), CT Women's Consortium
- Regulate the diet industry to prevent eating disorders. Submitted by: Trinity College Women's Center
- Increase public and professional awareness about cognitive or psychiatric disability issues. Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), CT Women's Health Campaign (CWHC), CT Women and Disability Network (CWDN)

Family Law

Public Policy Solutions

- End discrimination and provide full civil rights, including same sex marriage, to lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender individuals. Submitted by: Love Makes a Family LMF), Trinity College Women's Center, CT Women's Education & Legal Fund (CWEALF)
- Amend the Patient's Rights statute to require that adult consumers and parents of minor children with psychiatric and addictive disorders be full partners in the development and implementation of their recovery plans, have the right to an advocate of their choice in this development and implementation, and be able to assert their rights without coercion or retaliation. Submitted by: Mental Health Association of CT, Inc.
- Eliminate any presumption that parents with disabilities are less able to parent their children. Submitted by: Mental Health Association of CT, Inc.

- Provide adequate services to support women with children who are receiving behavioral health services in maintaining custody and/or ongoing relationships with their children. Submitted by: CT Legal Rights Project

Civil Rights

Public Policy Solutions

- Monitor new legislative proposals that could negatively impact the rights of legal immigrants especially Latino legal immigrants. Submitted by: Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC)
- Amend statute to add “gender and identity expression” and “disability” to Hate Crimes law. Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), CT National Organization for Women (CT NOW), CT Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

Equal Education and Job Training

Public Policy Solutions

- Provide equal opportunity for jobs to all women. Submitted by: National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)
- Institute a responsibly funded system of public education at all levels that promotes gender fairness, equity and diversity, including support for Title IX’s provisions which include:
 - Admissions
 - Housing and facilities
 - Courses and other educational activities
 - Career guidance and counseling services
 - Student financial aid
 - Scholastic, intercollegiate, club, or intramural athletics Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), American Association of University Women (AAUW), CT Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
- Provide funding to allow women to obtain basic skills and pursue higher education opportunities that lead to high skill, high wage employment. Submitted by: CT Charts-A-Course, CT Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
- Provide early care and education opportunities for young children to help them become successful and self-sufficient. Submitted by: Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative (HACCC)

- Provide financial aid for child care providers to get a bachelor's degree. Submitted by: Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative (HACCC)
- Restore funding to the Displaced Homemaker Program and the Entrepreneurial Center. Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), Hartford College For Women Career Counseling Center
- Enact legislation to facilitate the licensing of nurses trained in Puerto Rico. Submitted by: Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC)
- Support dual-language education in Connecticut. Submitted by: Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC)
- Provide upward mobility and job opportunities for women, particularly those who:
 - Do not have degrees
 - Possess "secretarial" skills, which are not seen as relevant with today's advanced technology; and/or
 - Are being prevented from accessing educational opportunities through current welfare reform policies. Submitted by: University of CT Women's Center
- Increase access to a variety of educational institutions for non-traditional female students. Submitted by: University of CT Women's Center
- Recruit and retain women of color staff and faculty on college campuses. The lack of mentoring opportunities and institutional support contribute to a "chilly climate" for women of color on campuses. Submitted by: African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC), University of CT Women's Center
- Allocate state funding for the federal "No Child Left Behind Act" and Universal Preschool. Submitted by: Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. -- CT Chapters

Gender and Culturally Appropriate Criminal Justice System

Public Policy Solutions

- Provide appropriate residential and behavioral health programming for girls in the juvenile justice system. Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), CT Association of Nonprofits (CAN)

- Address the rapid increase of the population at the York Correctional Institution, which has led to prison overcrowding. Submitted by: The CT Association of Nonprofits (CAN)
- Decrease the over-representation of African-Americans and Latinos in the juvenile justice system. Submitted by: African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC), Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC)

Political Participation and Equal Representation

Public Policy Solutions

- Provide increased opportunities for state residents to vote on Election Day by implementing Election Day Registration legislation. Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), DemocracyWorks, Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC)
- Provide equal footing and opportunity to women to run and be elected to public office by implementing Campaign Finance Reform. Submitted by: DemocracyWorks
- Involve communities in the political process via voter education and voter registration programs. Submitted by: Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. -- CT Chapters, DemocracyWorks
- Increase opportunities for women and people of color to serve on boards and commissions. Submitted by: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC), African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC), DemocracyWorks

Transportation Systems

Public Policy Solutions

- Support planning and development of a balanced transportation system in the state. Submitted by: League of Women Voters of CT, Inc. (LWVCT)

The Connecticut Women's Agenda – CWA

The Connecticut Women's Agenda (CWA) was initiated by the PCSW to provide an opportunity for groups that work on women's issues to share information and ideas. They include:

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

African American Affairs Commission

American Association of University Women

Children's Law Center

CT Association of Nonprofits

CT Charts-A-Course

CT Civil Liberties Union

CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence

CT Federation of Educational and Professional Employees

CT Legal Rights Project, Inc.

CT National Organization of Women

CT National Women's Political Caucus

CT Puerto Rican Forum

CT Sexual Assault Crisis Services

CT Valley Girl Scout Council, Inc.

CT Women and Disabilities Network, Inc.

CT Women's Education and Legal Fund

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Hartford Alumnae Chapter

DemocracyWorks

Girls Incorporated of Hartford
Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative
Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission
League of Women Voters of Connecticut, Inc.
Love Makes A Family
Junior League of Stamford/Norwalk
Hartford College For Women Look Forward Program
Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut, Inc.
MATCH Coalition
Mental Health Association of CT, Inc.
NARAL: Pro-Choice Connecticut
National Association of Women Business Owners - CT Chapter
National Association of Women in Construction
National Council of Jewish Women
Permanent Commission on the Status of Hartford Women
Planned Parenthood of Connecticut
Susan B. Anthony Project
Trinity College Child Care
Trinity College Women's Center
University of Connecticut School of Social Work
University of Connecticut Women's Center
YWCA of the Hartford Region